



INL sharpshooters won multiple awards at the annual Security Protective Officers Training Competition, including Security Protection Officer of the Year for INL's Jay Blake.

Aiming High: INL sharpshooters step up to the SPOTC challenge

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"We've certainly had our struggles over the years, but it's nice to be part of a winning team again."

That heartfelt statement sums up a solid achievement for INL's Doug Evancic. He oversees the INL sharpshooters who annually enter the Security Protective Officers Training Competition (SPOTC), one of the nation's toughest run-and-gun events for police and other specialized "protective forces."

And winners they are. INL's team captured fifth place in the nation at the event attended by hundreds of America's top protective force members.

And out of six officers it entered in solo competition, INL took first, third, eighth and 18th in the individual SPOTC shooting competition held at the same time.

INL's Jay Blake captured the Security Protection Officer of the Year Award as the top individual sharpshooter in the national Department of Energy-sponsored competition. Teammates Bryan Cook, Colt Green and Brad Hammer placed third, eighth and 18th respectively. Also competing for INL was Jake Jensen.

"As a team, we've always been a contender, but you can't make major mistakes," said Evancic. "Of 103 competitors there in the individual competition, Jay Blake was the only guy to shoot the whole match without a penalty. That's what it takes to win – and he did so in an outstanding manner."

"Our guys have once again shown why INL continues to be recognized as an emerging world-class lab," said Dan Webb, INL Security Operations manager. "We sent six officers to the 2008 SPOTC and had three finishes in the top 10. They competed against the best of the best from DOE sites across the nation — and they proved that INL Protective Force has a program that is second to none."

The sixth INL team member, Kyle Jorgensen, competed in the supervisor category and placed second overall. Jorgensen strongly credits the laboratory for supporting the rigorous training needed to do well at SPOTC.

"The company is behind the team — and that certainly made a difference," he said. "It's a young man's sport. You're shooting steel targets with rifles and handguns. You get intense physical training and lots of running right along with it. Running with that (gas) mask on is hard, too."

Jorgensen, who has been competing 17 years, was Security Police Officer of the Year in 1995. "Just seeing the other guys who do the same thing I do is important," he said. "Even after all these years, every time I step up to shoot, I get the adrenalin rush."

Facilities & Site Services Director Dwayne Coburn, who oversees security operations as part of his 1,300-person organization, has emphasized the value of professional competition to gauge the skills and preparedness of INL's security forces.

"I am really proud of these security officers," said Coburn. "Their extraordinary skills are on display when we dominate the individual competition in a premier nationwide event such as SPOTC. In addition, to place fifth as a team against some of the best marksmen in the nation is an honor for INL. INL takes great pride in what the team achieved."

Other key contributors to the team's success are Bennie Cooley and Dennis Larsen. Both are heavily involved in the training and development of INL sharpshooters.

The five-day competition consisted of a series of grueling events that combine strength, endurance and sharpshooting tests featuring handguns, rifles

and automatic weapons used in a variety of scenarios and conditions.

All the events are combat style, with the competitors running and/or doing other physical activity between shooting positions. Team events are timed and the final score is based on both shooting accuracy and total time.

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